

are fed up with this process, not just the process of earmarking but the lack of accountability and the absolute lack of transparency when it comes to how we make priorities in spending their money, not ours, every year. I think preserving Social Security, fixing Medicare to where it is available for those after the baby boom generation, solving our budget deficit today might be greater priorities. The real balance is between us and our grandchildren, and we lack the courage to make the hard choices now because it impacts our political careers. We have taken our eye off the ball. The ball is what about the future of the country? What about the opportunity for those who follow us? What about the liberty and freedom they are going to have or not have as a consequence of us ducking the hard choices today?

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I believe we have 4 minutes remaining, if I may inquire of the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I ask unanimous consent to speak for a total of 8 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I will try to be brief and to the point, if I cannot be eloquent. I want to talk about the Iraq situation.

A number of Senators have spoken about that this morning. They are looking at the progress that is taking place with the surge. I had great question about the surge at the outset. I questioned whether this was the right route to go. Yet I have to say my concerns were proven wrong.

Look at the numbers: U.S. deaths are down more than 50 percent since June. Iraqi deaths are down more than 50 percent since August. Sectarian violence is down dramatically. Areas of Baghdad are opening. October saw the fewest roadside bomb instances since September of 2005. Mortar rocket attacks are at their lowest level since February 2006. Nobody would say it is over, we have won, but they would say these are very positive events that have taken place.

The area we have to emphasize now is the political solution to capture the moment of getting more stability on the ground in Iraq. For some time Senator BIDEN and I have pushed a federalism approach that this body en-

dorsed by 70 votes. Now is the time for us to push much more aggressively on this political solution. We are seeing this already taking hold in the Kurdish region which has had a head start. Under Saddam Hussein, the Kurds were protected by our air power in the north. They have stabilized a government and have been operating basically that region. We now have Anbar stabilizing, the Anbar awakening. But they are not particularly interested in the federalism solution because they don't have oil. So what we have to have take place at the national level in Iraq is an oil law that distributes oil on a per capita basis around the country, not in regions, so federalism roots can take hold—not one Iraq but several regions and not necessarily on a sectarian basis.

Several Iraqis I have met with are saying they believe in federalism. They think it is the route to go. But they say: Don't say we are a Sunni region here or a Shia region there. These are going to be multisect regions so we can get together on a regional basis and not on a division basis around the country. This is a very promising route to go, but we need a political surge to take place in Iraq. We need to put emphasis on a political surge to capitalize on the stabilizing situation that is taking place on the ground.

We need a diplomatic surge. We need to push the Iraqis to get oil laws and debaathification taking place on a national level. We should prioritize local and provincial elections and encourage Iraq to devolve power from Baghdad. We should provide additional humanitarian assistance for those Iraqis who fled sectarian violence and relocated to other areas, or they are coming back. Some people are not coming back to areas because there is no housing left; it got blown up in all the violence that took place. Instead of pretending that nothing has changed, our debate needs to reflect the reality on the ground, that the security situation is much better, that we have a real moment here. The reality is that security has improved. The reality is that centralizing power in Baghdad is not the route to go. Creating federal regions provides a chance for that success to be captured and moved forward.

I question what came out of the Joint Economic Committee on the funding of the war. I am ranking Republican on that committee. That was not a committee report. I believe there are significant problems with how that funding level was arrived at. I don't think that was accurate. I don't think it was a positive way to move forward. Instead, now is the time to say: OK, let's capitalize on the surge. Let's go on a bipartisan basis with Senator BIDEN and myself on federalism. Let's push that to capture this, and then we as America can declare victory—not a Republican victory, not a Bush victory, but we as Americans can say it is now stabilized and we can start to pull our troops back. That is the talk that is

penetrating now, and it is the talk we need to have a lot more of.

Iraqi President Talibani endorses federalism as a political solution. The Kurds have announced they will convene a federalism conference. Some Iraqi Shia groups are openly discussing the creation of a region that would be a federalism model. The Sunnis do not particularly want to because they do not have oil, so we have to get that oil devolved.

I think there is a real route forward for us to all be able to say, soon, we are making progress, it is sustainable, and we are handing it off to the Iraqis.

Mr. President, I thank you for your indulgence.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I understand I have time in morning business. Let me claim that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 15 minutes.

APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want to talk about several things today. I want to start with this question of why, at the end of the legislative session, there is such intractability in trying to get the appropriations bills done.

It is a paradox to me that President Bush, who has come to this town in the last 7 years, and at the start of his Presidency said, "I want a fiscal policy that moves in a certain direction." He had a sufficient number of votes in the Congress to accommodate that so he said, "Look, it appears in the next 10 years we are going to have very large budget surpluses, so I want put in place very large tax cuts, most of which will go to wealthy Americans." I did not support that, but a number of people in his party did, so it became enacted. I said we ought to be conservative. We ought to worry things might change. Maybe these surpluses won't appear. We do not have them yet. They are only projections.

Well, guess what? The President got his fiscal policy, and those surpluses did not, in fact, appear. We faced a recession, 9/11, a war in Afghanistan, a war in Iraq, and a continuing war against terrorism—all of which has been very costly. We have run up \$3 trillion in debt with this President's fiscal policy—\$3 trillion. Now, I think it is unusual that at this stage of this session of Congress the President has done two things. He has sent to this Congress a request for \$196 billion in emergency funding for the war in Afghanistan and Iraq—mostly for Iraq.